

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAJ-01 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 DRC-01

/121 W

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R 062101Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 14197

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: THE FDP: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

BEGIN SUMMARY: CONTINUED ASSOCIATION WITH THE SPD IN A COALITION GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO POSE MAJOR PROBLEMS FOR THE FDP. IN ADDITION TO SUBSTANTIVE DIFFERENCES, PERSONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SCHMIDT AND GENSCHER NEVER WARM HAVE WORSENER. WHILE NO DRAMATIC DEVELOPMENTS ARE ANTICIPATED IN THE NEAR FUTURE, THE FDP CAN BE EXPECTED TO EXPLORE WHATEVER ALTERNATIVES ARE AVAILABLE. END SUMMARY

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1. THE PROBLEMS OF THE FDP ARE CHRONIC BUT NOT FATAL. ON

THE NEGATIVE SIDE, ITS ELECTORAL BASE IS NARROW ITS IDEOLOGICAL PROFILE IS BLURRED, ITS POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IS WEAK, AND IT LACKS MONEY. IT SUFFERS FROM INTERNAL TENSIONS BETWEEN ITS LEFTIST AND CONSERVATIVE WINGS AND IT IS UNDERGOING CHANGES IN LEADERSHIP ITS OVERRIDING PROBLEM, OF COURSE, IS THAT IT CAN NOT HOPE TO GOVERN EXCEPT IN COALITION WITH EITHER THE SPD OR THE CDU. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, THE FDP AND ITS 42 BUNDESTAG SEATS ARE NEEDED BY THE SPD. THE FDP HAS ACCORDINGLY BEEN ABLE TO FORCE THE SPD TO COMPROMISE ON ITS LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM. THE FDP HAS ALSO SUCCESSFULLY BARGAINED FOR FOUR OF THE FIFTEEN MINISTRIES, AND THEY ARE IMPORTANT ONES (FOREIGN, INTERIOR ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURE). THE CHANCES ARE GOOD THAT THE SPD WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK FDP SUPPORT IN THE FUTURE. ALTHOUGH THE CDU NATURALLY INSISTS IT IS AIMING FOR AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN 1976 ALL RECENT POLLS INDICATE THAT NEITHER IT NOR THE SPD CAN CLAIM A MAJORITY OF THE VOTERS AND THAT THE FDP WILL AGAIN BE IN A POSITION TO TIP THE SCALES.

2. IT IS NO SECRET, HOWEVER, THAT ALL IS NOT WELL IN THE SCHMIDT-GENSCHER COALITION. THERE ARE GENUINE SUBSTANTIVE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FDP AND THE SPD ON QUESTIONS OF ECONOMIC POLICY AND ON VARIOUS PROGRAMS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO PUT THROUGH THE BUNDESTAG NOTABLY ON INDUSTRIAL CO-DETERMINATION, PROPERTY LAW CAPITAL ACCUMULATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING. THE ROLE OF WHITE COLLAR WORKERS IN INDUSTRIAL CO-DETERMINATION AND OF INDUSTRIAL CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING TOUCH ON SENSITIVE FDP NERVES, SINCE THE FDP IS STILL ESSENTIALLY A PARTY OF BUSINESSMEN AND WHITE COLLAR EMPLOYEES. THE FDP SAYS IT HAS ALREADY COMPROMISED WITH THE SPD ENOUGH ON THESE ISSUES AND IS TRYING TO DIG IN ITS HEELS AGAINST SPD PRESSURES FOR FURTHER CONCESSIONS, PARTICULARLY ON INDUSTRIAL CO-DETERMINATION

3. ALTHOUGH STRAINS IN THE COALITION ON SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS ARE NOTHING NEW AND TO BE EXPECTED, THERE ARE NOW IN ADDITION SOME SERIOUS TENSIONS DEVELOPING AMONG

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THE PERSONALITIES. AS EXPECTED (SEE BONN 12001), THE SCHMIDT-GENSCHER RELATIONSHIP IS MORE BUSINESSLIKE AND LESS WARM THAN THE BRANDT-SCHEEL COMBINATION. MORE SIGNIFICANT, HOWEVER, IS THE FACT THAT SCHMIDT NOW SEEMS TO BE GOING OUT OF HIS WAY TO UPSTAGE AND TO IRRITATE GENSCHER. WE UNDERSTAND THAT GENSCHER'S NOSE IS VERY MUCH OUT OF JOINT OVER SCHMIDT'S RECENT VISITS TO ITALY AND PARIS; EVEN AS FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER WAS NOT

INFORMED OF THE TRIPS UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT, AND HAS APPARENTLY NOT BEEN FULLY BRIEFED ON THE RESULTS. THE GAUS-HONECKER MEETINGS HAVE EVIDENTLY ALSO BEEN ARRANGED WITHOUT THE PARTICIPATION OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE.

4. IT COULD WELL BE THAT SCHMIDT IS SIMPLY FEELING HIS OATS, OR THAT HE AND HIS ADVISORS ARE TOO PREOCCUPIED WITH THE SPD'S OWN PROBLEMS TO WORRY ABOUT THE NICETIES OF COALITION COURTESIES. IN ANY EVENT, THE CHANCELLOR HAS A REPUTATION FOR INSENSITIVITY TO THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS. POSSIBLY, THE SPD IS TRYING TO GET EVEN WITH

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R 062101Z SEP 74

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GENSCHER, WHO (SO FAR, AT LEAST) HAS NOT IN THEIR VIEW ACCEPTED HIS RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE GUILLAUME AFFAIR.

5. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THE SPD LEADERSHIP BELIEVES THAT IT DOES NOT HAVE TO TAKE THE FDP TOO SERIOUSLY AT THIS POINT. ALTHOUGH THE SPD CANNOT GOVERN WITHOUT THE FDP, MOST OBSERVERS SEE LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE FDP WILL DESERT THE SPD IN FAVOR OF A COALITION WITH THE CDU, AT LEAST AT THIS TIME.

6. CERTAINLY IT IS TRUE THAT DESPITE THE FDP'S PROBLEMS
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WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, MANY IN THE FDP (ESPECIALLY THE LEFT WING) DO NOT CONSIDER THE CDU AN ATTRACTIVE COALITION PARTNER. FOR THE MORE LEFTIST ELEMENTS IN THE FDP, IT IS A QUESTION OF IDEOLOGY, YET EVEN THE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS IN THE PARTY BELIEVE THAT THE CDU WILL NOT BE AN ATTRACTIVE PARTNER UNTIL ITS LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS ARE RESOLVED. THE FDP ALSO MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO SWITCH TOO QUICKLY FROM ONE COALITION PARTNER TO ANOTHER. HAVING SWITCHED TO THE LEFT TO A COALITION WITH THE SPD IN 1969, IT COULD FACE A CREDIBILITY PROBLEM AS A PARTY IF IT SWITCHES TO THE RIGHT IN 1976. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE FDP IS NOT ETERNALLY WEDDED TO A COALITION WITH THE SPD, AND SIX YEARS IS A LONG TIME.

7. HOWEVER, MAINTAINING AND DEVELOPING A CLEAR IDEOLOGICAL PROFILE AND A DISTINCTIVE PROGRAM HAS NOT BEEN EASY FOR THE FDP IN ITS FIVE YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SPD. THE FDP HAS YET TO LEAVE A CLEAR IMPRINT ON GOVERNMENT POLICY, AND ITS ABILITY TO SERVE AS A "BRAKE" ON THE SPD HAS NOT BEEN WHAT MANY HAD HOPED. THE FDP KNOWS THAT SOME OF THE CDU VOTES THAT IT PICKED UP IN 1972 COULD WELL REVERT TO THE CDU IN 1976- THE FDP'S IMAGE HAS ALSO BEEN SOMEWHAT TARNISHED THROUGH ITS CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE SPD. IN THE RECENT ELECTIONS IN HAMBURG, SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN, RHINELAND PFALZ AND LOWER SAXONY, THE FDP DID NOT DO AS WELL AS IT HAD HOPED OR AS THE POLLSTERS HAD PREDICTED, AN INDICATION THAT VOTER DISSATISFACTION WITH THE SPD HAS TENDED TO SPILL OVER TO THE FDP.

8. FDP/SPD COALITIONS IN THE LAENDER ARE ALSO SHOWING SIGNS OF STRESS, ESPECIALLY IN HAMBURG AND NORTH RHINE WESTFALIA. ALTHOUGH SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES ARE LOCAL, POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN THE LAENDER WILL BE WATCHED CAREFULLY TO SEE IF THEY REFLECT OR SIGNAL CHANGES ON

THE NATIONAL SCENE

9. AT THIS POINT, ALL OF THIS DOES NOT MEAN MUCH MORE
THAN THAT THE FDP WILL BE DOING SOME HARD THINKING IN
THE MONTHS AHEAD ABOUT THE ALTERNATIVES BEFORE IT. FOR
THIS REASON THE NATIONAL CONVENTION IN HAMBURG SEPTEM-
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BER 29-OCTOBER 2 WILL BE IMPORTANT FOR THE PARTY'S
FUTURE COURSE. THE PARTY WILL ELECT A NEW VICE
CHAIRMAN TO SUCCEED GENSCHER (WHO WILL BE OFFICIALLY
ELECTED AS CHAIRMAN), AND A NEW SECRETARY-GENERAL TO
FILL THE VACANCY LEFT BY THE LATE KARL-HERMANN FLACH.
MAIHOFFER (LEFT) AND FRIEDERICH (RIGHT) WILL REPORTEDLY
RUN AGAINST EACH OTHER FOR THE VICE CHAIRMANSHIP; MARTIN
BANGEMANN IS GENSCHER'S CHOICE FOR SECRETARY-GENERAL,
ALTHOUGH BAUM'S NAME HAS ALSO BEEN MENTIONED.

10. THE CONVENTION WILL ALSO BE THE FIRST TEST OF

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SGENSCHER'S ABILITY AS A PARTY LEADER, SINCE THE CHURCH-STATE ISSUE AND THE QUESTION OF EMPLOYMENT OF RADICALS IN THE PUBIC SERVICE ARE EXPECTED TO STIR UP THE INTERNAL LEFT-RIGHT TENSIONS WITHIN THE PARTY. BEYOND THE CONVENTION, GENSCHER AND THE PARTY LEADERSHIP WILL HAVE TO ADDRESS THEMSELVES TO SHORING UP THE PARTY'S FINANCES AND TO DEVELOPING THE PARTY'S ORGANIZATIONAL APPARATUS.

11. BETWEEN NOW AND 1976 THE FDP WILL ALSO BE INFLUENCED BY DEVELOPMENTS OVER WHICH IT HAS LITTLE CONFIDENTIAL

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CONTROL. THESE INCLUDE THE ECONOMY AS WELL AS INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE SPD AND THE CDU. IF THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL GOVERNMENT SUCCEEDS IN CONTROLLING INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT TO THE RELATIVE SATISFACTION OF THE ELECTORATE, THE FDP IS UNLIKELY TO SEEK TO DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM THE SPD. THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE PRESENT COALITION IS ALSO LIKELY TO CONTINUE IF SCHMIDT IS SUCCESSFUL IN CONTROLLING THE MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS IN HIS OWN PARTY. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE ECONOMY TAKES A TURN FOR THE WORSE, AND/OR IF THE SPD SHOULD BECOME BOGGED DOWN WITH INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLY LEADERSHIP SHIFTS, THE FDP CAN BE EXPECTED TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT A COALITION WITH THE CDU.
HILLENBRAND

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COALITION GOVERNMENT, PARTY UNITY, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, NEGOTIATIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BONN14197
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740248-0539
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740970/aaaachcm.tel
Line Count: 322
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 APR 2002 by collinp0>; APPROVED <27 JUN 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE FDP: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS BEGIN SUMMARY: CONTINUED ASSOCIATION WITH THE SPD IN A
TAGS: PINT, GE, (SCHMIDT), (GENSCHER)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005